‘We need to walk the talk’ was a common phrase used at the 2019 IOD convention with discussions on climate change and the necessity implementation of sustainability into the island’s economy. The heated arguments about the standards of companies’ sustainability programs and the discussions about enhancing Guernsey’s systems to accommodate a green agenda was fascinating to witness and see how businesses responded to this important challenge.

The timing of the IOD convention theme ‘the Business of Climate Change’ was impeccable for us as students, as the previous week over 1000 secondary school students including myself marched against Guernsey’s policies and how they need to be altered to facilitate changein line with the Paris agreement. Alastair Stewart, an eminent moderator/presenter facilitated an excellent debate ensuring it was insightful, informative and well balanced for the audience.

Personally I enjoyed the fact that Alastair Stewart empowered us students to share our ideas and voice our concerns from clothes swishing, to how we would only work for or conduct business with companies that comply with ESG standards. The ESG standards are important to our generation and it was interesting to see how businesses reacted to our views and principles. It was clear that some felt it was too much cost to implement these standards into their business while others recognised the importance of adopting these standards for the overall success of their business and attracting the next generation of talent.

The panelist were informative and represented a good diversity of opinions which I feel is fundamental in all debates. I personally was particularly impressed with Deputy Barry Brehaut who kept ‘his cool’ even when coming under scrutiny from Alastair, he turned up and stood his ground, even after coming under scrutiny from the Guernsey Press that very day due to a published Letter of Intent, he explained the delay of the climate change strategy and using the excuse of having to deal with the uncertainties of Brexit. Kathryn Porter, another speaker described how we as an island need to decarbonize, digitalize our energy systems to make them efficient and consider forms of renewable energy. I totally agreed with Katherine and I think Guernsey can lead the way in demonstrating how it’s possible to have a booming sustainable economy. By having incentives in place and building the appropriate infrastructure, so Government can facilitate Guernsey carbon Neutral by 2050.

My interest in green finance especially in Guernsey and the prospect of studying economics and finance at university means I was very excited for what the second part of the debate would hold. This was kicked off with Douglas Farquois presenting on how to integrate ESG and sustainability into investment and financial products. I am convinced this is what Guernsey needs to do to continue to be a leading International Financial Center. Guernsey has already started on this journey with the establishment of Green accreditation for funds. If businesses adopt the ESG standards it facilitates Guernsey to have a greater impact beyond its shores in how money is invested globally allowing us to be become part of global change in government and private investment. Douglas clearly articulated the business case for ESG and I think sparked interest in many companies present and the opportunities that are out there to be harvested. I felt a wave of change in mindset by many companies on how their policies and strategies will have to change to win in this market and to use Guernsey’s track record on innovation and agility to become a market leader. This brought the debate full circle, as if Guernsey wants to be successful in this ESG Investment space they too need to show they are taking the climate challenges seriously and companies will not invest in a jurisdiction that is not seeking to be Carbon neutral – hence walk the talk. I felt privileged to be part of this very important debate and it is great that business leaders recognise that it’s important to have the voice of the next generation present as after all its our future.

Guernsey can implement these changes! It has a fantastic track record of bringing parties together to make change in the most efficient and innovative way. We need to be brave with Big, Bold Visions, to make Guernsey not a ‘Tax Haven’ but be known as a ‘Green Haven’, a world renowned jurisdiction known for not only their involvement in green finance, but living these principles in how we run our gorgeous island . I have my own personal bold vision where I can see myself becoming one of those ‘directors of tomorrow’ working in Guernsey to help support this agenda. The IOD convention enlighten me that there is an exciting opportunity to work in Finance and also stick to my green credentials and make a global positive impact.